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No. 504. (Tenth Year.)

LONDON, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1911.

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THE NEW SYMBOLIC LOGIC.

PRINCIPIA MATHEMATICA. By A. N. WHITEHEAD and B. RUSSELL. Vol. I. (Cambridge University Press. 25s. net.)

Perhaps twenty or thirty people in England may be expected to read this book. It has many claims to be widely read; all professional mathematicians, for example, can and ought to read it; but it will have to contend with an immense mass of prejudice and misconception, and we should probably be over-sanguine if we supposed that there are half a dozen who will. It is a strange and discouraging fact that mathematicians as a class are utterly impatient of inquiries into the foundations of their own subject. Natural science has always distrusted and despised philosophy. It is hardly too much to say that any determined attempt at accurate thinking is likely to be distasteful to the average scientific mind; and this, although certainly deplorable, is not so strange as it might seem, for ingenuity and imagination, rather than accurate thought, are the ordinary weapons of science. The mathematician has no such excuse. He has received an elaborate logical training and is familiar with what is abstract and remote and unpractical; and it is not unreasonable to expect that he should have learnt to respect the truth and to tolerate, if not to sympathize with, those who, like the authors of this book, seek it with a patience and determination that no difficulties can arrest. Any such expectation will be disappointed. In England we find the authors regarded by mathematicians as amusing cranks. In France we find the great Poincaré, who has a weakness for philosophy to which we owe several most entertaining volumes, pouring contempt on *la Logistique*, and preaching a form of pragmatism as hazy and elusive as any philosopher's. Even in Germany, the home of mathematical precision, we find the successors of Cantor and Weierstrass protesting angrily that to ask really fundamental questions is an indecency and an insult to mathematics. To this sort of expert prejudice it is useless to appeal. But philosophers are more tolerant than mathematicians and more interested in fundamentals; and there are no doubt many philosophers and many laymen who would like to read this book but may be deterred from doing so by misconceptions of a different kind. To such it may be possible to give a little encouragement.

Non-mathematical readers may very naturally be frightened by an exaggerated notion of the technical difficulty of the book. The last page is a very natural place at which to open a book, and the appearance of the last page, with its crazy-looking symbolism, is appalling. And it would be silly to pretend that the book is not really difficult; some of it is very difficult indeed. It is, of course, also true that in reading it a trained mathematician enjoys a considerable advantage; some of the ideas will be more or less familiar to him; he can grasp more quickly the salient features of a symbolism; the general tone of the book is mathematical, and there are parallels and illustrations which it is difficult to appreciate without some knowledge of mathematics; in a word, the authors' minds work naturally on mathematical lines. So much the lay reader must be prepared to find. But he need not be too much discouraged. In the first place, although more knowledge of mathematics would no doubt be a great assistance to him, no profound knowledge is required. All that is wanted is some sort of general familiarity with mathematical ideas. Moreover the mathematician's advantage varies very widely from page to page, and it is just where the book is most difficult that this advantage

is least; the easy parts will be particularly easy to the mathematician, the hard parts practically as hard to him as to the outsider. Finally, to be frightened by the symbolism is to run away from the most shadowy of bogeys. A mathematician can master it in an hour, and the non-mathematical reader will find in a surprisingly short time that, so far from being an additional source of difficulty, it is extraordinarily easy to understand, to read fluently, and even to use oneself. The language of modern symbolic logic, vulgarly described after its originator as "Peanoese," has been developed under the authors' hands into a vehicle of astonishing flexibility and power, a real triumph of technical skill, fairly justifying their claim that it enables the mind "to construct trains of reasoning in regions of thought in which the imagination would be entirely unable to sustain itself without symbolic help." It is possible that the constant use of symbols has to some extent reacted on the authors' mastery of their own tongue. Certainly, in the explanatory portions (though there are parts that are models of lucid exposition) they are often much less clear; though sometimes, no doubt, this is due simply to the inherent difficulties of the subject-matter, and sometimes to condensation carried too far.

We trust, therefore, that no one who is prepared to recognize the value of work in logic and who appreciates the enormous importance in logic and general philosophy of mathematical concepts, *function*, *class*, *number*, *magnitude*, and so forth, will be too diffident of his ability to cope with the difficulties of this book. It is not a book that many will read right through. But it will be a foolish philosopher who will not make a serious effort to master the most essential sections. The time has passed when a philosopher can afford to be ignorant of mathematics, and a little perseverance will be well rewarded. It will be something to learn how many of the spectres that have haunted philosophers modern mathematics has finally laid to rest. And it is as bracing as a cold bath to turn from the muddy pragmatisms of current philosophy to clear-cut and dispassionate discussions in which it is recognized that words have definite meanings, and that premises imply conclusions, and that careful reasoning is the only method by which we can hope to arrive at the truth.

The first volume of "Principia Mathematica," which is all that has appeared so far, contains most of the work that is likely to be of interest to the general reader. It is true that the two later volumes will include the mathematical theories of infinity and continuity, topics which have distracted philosophers in the past and will no doubt continue to do so until philosophers make a habit of learning a little mathematics. But these theories are by now classical and easily accessible to any one who wishes to become acquainted with them. And this volume contains the part of the work most likely to excite general interest and controversy, an introduction of ninety pages written in the ordinary tongue and summarizing all that is most novel in the general doctrines of the book. There is no doubt that this introduction, dealing as it does with all the most obscure and controversial portions of the subject, is from the standpoint of the general reader too short. Its style is in places almost painfully condensed, and there are passages that are hardly intelligible until we refer forward to the detailed symbolic development which comes later. Moreover, the authors, in their desire to "avoid controversy and general philosophy," are apt to leave the reader uncertain as to what (if anything) in the way of general philosophy their whole treatment presupposes. They would probably say that the mathematical edifice is independent of the precise material with which we fill in the philosophical foundations; and no doubt in this they would be right. But they have naturally found it impossible to carry out their intention of "avoiding general philosophy" quite consistently; and the result is sometimes very puzzling. To take a definite instance—"proposition" must be regarded, for the main purposes of the book, as ultimate and unanalysable. Any analysis of the meaning of "proposition" is prior to mathematics. So much the reader will cheerfully accept. But it will come as an unpleasant surprise to him (at any rate if he is not familiar with Mr. Russell's "Philosophical Essays") to be told (p. 46) that "what we call a 'proposition' is not a single entity at all . . . ; the phrase which expresses a proposition . . . does not have meaning in itself." It would have been better, we think, if the authors had made up their minds to "face the music," and had begun with a definitely philosophical excursus—a mere ha'porth of tar in the outfit of such a Leviathan.

The main thesis of the book is the same as that of Mr. Russell's "Principles of Mathematics"—the thesis that pure mathematics involves no axioms or indefinables beyond those of formal logic. And its cardinal doctrines group themselves roughly into three divisions—the general theory of the variable and the propositional function, the theory of incomplete symbols, the doctrine of types. None of these doctrines will be found entirely novel by students of Mr. Russell's writings; all have been formulated or foreshadowed in the "Principles" or elsewhere. Here they are stated for the first time with an air of finality and as a connected whole.

The theory of propositional functions shows in a striking

way how certain kinds of ultimate philosophical inquiry may be irrelevant to mathematics. It is beyond doubt that the "propositional function" is a notion of extraordinary logical importance—mathematics, one may say, is the science of propositional functions. And it is perfectly easy to recognize a propositional function when we see it; " x is a " is a propositional function; when a is determined—when for x we substitute Socrates or Plato—we obtain a proposition. But what is a propositional function? The question is "by no means an easy one." When we say " x is a "

it is plain that, regarded psychologically, we have here a single judgment. But what are we to say of the object of the judgment? We are not judging that Socrates is Socrates, nor that Plato is Plato, nor any other of the definite judgments that are instances of the law of identity, for we may be quite capable of judging " x is a " even if we have never heard of Socrates or Plato. But we cannot follow the discussion further now. Our object is to point out, on the one hand, that the reader must not expect to find this book free from ultimate doubts, and, on the other, that the persistence of such doubts need not imperil the logical superstructure.

The theory of "incomplete symbols" is one of the authors' triumphs; it could hardly be clearer, nor, once understood, more consonant with common sense. It cannot be illustrated better than by the old puzzle—old, that is to say, to readers of Mr. Russell—of George IV. and Scott. George IV. wanted to know whether Scott was the author of "Waverley," and in point of fact he was. It seems, therefore, that what George IV. really wanted to know was whether Scott was Scott. For, if "the author of Waverley" is a definite object a , "Scott is the author of Waverley" means "Scott is a ." And this proposition is either trivial or false; trivial if a is Scott, when "Scott is a " reduces to "Scott is Scott," and false if a is anything but Scott. On the other hand, it is perfectly obvious that "Scott is the author of Waverley" is neither trivial nor false. From this dilemma there is only one way of escape—namely, by denying that "the author of Waverley" is a definite object a . This is to deny that "the author of Waverley" means anything, and seems at first paradoxical. The paradox is one which soon disappears; the point is, of course, that "the author of Waverley," and "descriptions" in general, mean nothing by themselves, though phrases containing them often have a perfectly definite meaning. This idea is familiar enough to mathematicians, and in it we have in germ the whole theory of "incomplete symbols," a theory applied by the authors now not only to descriptions but also to classes and relations, though here the theory becomes a little more complicated and elusive.

With the doctrine of types we come to the most difficult, and perhaps the most controversial, theory of the book. This doctrine has been invented for the express purpose of solving a class of puzzles which has tormented generations of logicians. The classical example is the "Epimenides." In its most modern form this paradox is as follows. If I say "I am lying," then, if my statement is true, I am lying, and therefore it is false; and if it is false, I am not lying, and therefore it is true. Such paradoxes cannot (as is often supposed) be accounted for by holding up one's hands and saying "How absurd!" The doctrine of types, in which the authors find rest from all these puzzles, is in a way the least fundamental, and will probably be found the least satisfying, part of the book; and the authors are careful not to claim too much finality for their solution. There can be no doubt, too, that it does involve consequences likely to startle common sense; it forces us, for example, to believe that a whole series of common words, true and false among them, have infinitely many different meanings. And there are important points about which the authors leave us doubtful. Are there "infinite types"? Can one tell a lie "of infinite order"? Is it really true, as theologians tell us, that "the finite cannot comprehend the infinite," or is that a mere logical superstition, as De Morgan held? But of two things the authors have convinced us. One is that some form of some such doctrine as the doctrine of types is logically indispensable; the other is that there really are different meanings of "truth"—that when I say "it is true that ' x is identical with x , for all values of ' x '" and when I say "it is true that ' x is yellow,'" I do not in the two cases mean the same by true. This, we think, they show not only to follow from their premises, but to be convincing to "expert common sense"; and when we have admitted this, we have admitted that the chief paradox of their doctrine has disappeared.

It would be insulting to affix the ordinary labels of praise to a book conceived with so far-reaching an object and on so vast a scale. We may perhaps venture to pick out a minor feature of the book for commendation. It is easy to think, but hard to joke, in symbols; and this volume has not the consistent humour of the "Principles of Mathematics." Still, considering the difficulty of the medium, some of the jokes are very good. The best is that perpetrated at the expense of the law of contradiction. But it would be unfair to the circulation of the book that a reviewer should repeat them; and we leave the reader to discover them for himself.

"A Concordance to the Poems of William Wordsworth," edited by Professor Lane Cooper, of Cornell University—a large work furthered by the American Concordance Society—will be published by Messrs. Smith, Elder on the 21st inst. On the same date they will have ready Admiral of the Fleet Sir Edward H. Seymour's reminiscences—"My Naval Career and Travels"—and Sir Henry Craik's "Life of Edward Earl of Clarendon," which has been written with the object of vindicating the consistency of Clarendon's political ideals and his title to a high place in the roll of British statesmen.

Professor Valerie Kluchevsky's "History of Russia" has been translated into English by C. J. Hogarth and will be published in three volumes by Messrs. Dent.

THE PROVINCE OF THE STATE.

THE PROVINCE OF THE STATE. By SIR ROLAND WILSON.
(P. S. King and Son. 7s. 6d. n.)

Vox clamantis in deserto—that is not an inapt description of this volume, which denies almost every article of the creed of the practical politician, champions lost causes, and argues strongly against much which the State has of late done and is likely to do in the future. Sir Roland Wilson's principles are his own, not those of any existing party, and we do not suppose that he has much hope of making converts. None the less is the volume an instructive, invigorating discussion of problems which are too often in these days slurred over or solved in a slovenly fashion. It is a pleasure to come upon a serious examination of matters generally decided not by reasons but by votes, and sometimes treated as unworthy of the consideration of sensible men. The generation which looked for instruction to Mill and Spencer was profoundly interested in the question, What is the province of the State? It did not despair of finding a formula to which all legitimate efforts and activity on the part of any Government should conform. In those times there was probably too ready acquiescence in limitations framed with an eye to conditions by no means permanent and universal. The narrow views of Humboldt and Herbert Spencer brought about a reaction and prepared the way for the acceptance of the neo-Hegelian conception of the State as taught by Green or Professor Bosanquet, and the tenets of the present Socialists. Of late the speculative question has lost all interest for all but a very few. The modern doctrine, if acquiescence in a policy of drift can be so termed, is that the State should do what we find by experience it can do; only by trial can the legitimate province be ascertained. It is a novelty to find a full and fair discussion of the old question without reference to effect upon votes or parties.

To our author the State appears to be mainly a justice-enforcing association, a necessary organization for protection against wrongdoing and the settlement of conflicting claims. "Justice is the end of government" is the motto of the first chapter. This saying, to be found in the *Federalist*, and quoted with approval by Bentham, is a summary of the argument of the volume. "Back to Bentham" is the substance of the teaching of one who is a stout survivor of the philosophic Radicals, fairly numerous a quarter of a century ago. True, he gives to justice a very elastic and comprehensive meaning; much of what the Socialist would invite Governments to perform for one reason and in virtue of one theory, he would put upon them for other reasons. We are using justice in a loose sense when it includes historical and scientific research and land surveying by or at the expense of the State. But in the main our author avows himself an impenitent individualist, a Radical of the Benthamite type, convinced that his ideas have a future, and that they have never yet got a fair trial; entirely opposed to the modern extensions of State activity such as the National Insurance Bill. There was no need for the assumption of totally new functions by the State.

I am inclined to believe that if the ideas of Bentham, or those of the early Victorian Radicals, had been at any time really dominant, the general prosperity and contentment would before this have out the ground from under the feet of our Socialist friends, and that we should have heard very little of either Marxian or Fabian collectivism.

A dictum which will not recommend itself either to those who recognize the shallowness or limitations of Bentham's political philosophy, or to those who have observed that discontent appears in times of prosperity just as often as in times of suffering. It may be quite true that philosophical Radicalism never got a fair trial; the contrary statement may be a myth industriously circulated. But we may well question the constructive merits or capacity of philosophical Radicalism. Our author goes very far in his war against an encroaching State; he takes issue with the advocates of State education; he thinks that immense expenditure, magnificent machinery, and much promise are compatible with poor results, with nothing conducive to the formation of character or the development of intelligence. He has the courage of his opinions, and from the expenditure, Imperial and local, he would strike off some fifty millions as being given to purposes lying outside the true province of the State. As to the Post Office, he remarks "our system requires the abolition of the present State monopoly." It is right to add, in explanation of his position, that, while limiting the province in several directions, he would extend it in others, particularly in all that relates to the administration of law and justice. Thus he would abolish Court fees payable by suitors; and he would give compensation to persons unjustly accused of crimes. Some readers who will go with him a long way will part company when they find that he advocates strong death duties and contemplates a new source of revenue from a scheme of land nationalization which he faintly outlines. It is the fault of a clever book that its main purpose is imperfectly carried out. The author, who has a full mind and many living interests, saunters leisurely along, now turning to the right, now to the left, as his curiosity prompts. We miss a certain grip in the reasoning, a consecutiveness in the exposition, essential to the best discussion of a difficult subject. Yet the book, the outcome of long reflection and much knowledge, is worth a score of productions which pander to present prejudices and bedeck with fine names "the growing superstition as to the moral omnipotence of the State."

Mr. Murray announces that Miss A. M. Stoddart, who died last week, had already revised and passed for press the whole of the proofs of her new book, "The Life of Paracelsus," which will be ready early in the season.

Next month Messrs. George Allen will publish, under the title of "Bismarck's Pen," a translation of the memoirs of Dr. Heinrich Abeken, who was behind the scenes throughout the Franco-German War. The translation is by Mrs. C. E. Barrett-Lennard and M. W. Hoper.

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